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# USAID Water & Environment (WE)

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## Programs in El Salvador

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#### Background.

The goal of The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/El Salvador strategy is to achieve sustainable development and democracy. This overall goal is supported by two sub-goals: to consolidate the peace process; and to alleviate rural poverty in El Salvador. The strategy's major target group is the rural poor, especially women and children, that reside within AGUA's 18 target municipalities. This target area also contains El Salvador's three major watersheds in the departments of Ahuachapán, Usulután, and Morazán.

The Strategic Objective, ***Increased access by rural households to clean water***, and its AGUA activities support the strategy by providing assistance to help rural Salvadorans gain sustainable access to clean water. AGUA also integrates and coordinates its assistance with water-related activities that have been undertaken by the Mission's other SOs.

Using this new water approach, four Intermediate Results (IRs) were identified as necessary components in the achievement of the Strategic Objective and are described as follows:

- IR4.1 **Improved Quality of Water Sources:** Improvements in agricultural, conservation, and water management practices; and increased solid and liquid waste treatment.
- IR4.2 **Improved Performance of Water Delivery Systems:** Improvements in physical infrastructure, administrative & technical capabilities, and cost recovery mechanisms.



IR4.3 **More Effective Citizen Actions to Address Water Issues:** Increased awareness of causes and consequences of insufficient and unclean water; increased knowledge of options/solutions for clean water; and increased numbers of communities that are organized around water issues.

IR4.4 **Improved Municipal Management of Water Resources:** Increased municipal technical and managerial capacity; and more effective regulatory mechanisms for water resources and water delivery systems.

#### AGUA: Acceso, Gestión, y Uso Racional de Agua

The purpose of AGUA is to increase access by rural residents to clean water in an environmentally sustainable way.

AGUA's strategic approach is to address El Salvador's scarcity of clean water through adoption of an *integrated*, *sustainable*, and *replicable* methodology for provision of access to clean water.

The **integrated** element is addressed by focusing efforts at the watershed level, many of which are shared by two or more municipalities. This inter-municipal boundary helps to unify communities around water resource issues at the place where these resources originate - in the watersheds through rainfall. These three major Salvadoran watersheds were further delineated by AGUA into 64 micro-watersheds, 14 of which were prioritized into the project and for which individual diagnostics were prepared. Based on this information, AGUA determined mechanisms for appropriate solutions to managing water, some of which include:

- Small farmers trained in agricultural extension practices that improve their livelihood while conserving their environment
- Community groups formed around the protection of water sources used by members of those same groups
- Municipalities working together to form watershed committees that protect the water resources interests of their constituencies

AGUA uses the cross cutting theme of water to build cooperation in development. Since all of AGUA's funded partners share common objectives, they have all formed at least one and sometimes several alliances with each other, pooling their resources in the interest of efficiency. These alliances are simple agreements to share information or to work together on overlapping project activities. AGUA also collaborates with USAID's three other SOs through many of their partners and seeks additional synergies by building working relationships at the local and national levels



Agricultural promoters meeting in San Juan Loma Alta, Municipality of Berlín, Department of Usulután

between NGOs, community groups, government institutions, and other donors.

For example, *ROCA*, an agricultural technologies and marketing project funded by the Economic Growth and Education (EGE) office, is working along side AGUA to increase the availability of environmentally sound agricultural services. These services are made available to cooperatives and producers groups, as well as to smaller, lower income producers through the creation and strengthening of secondary level organizations such as cooperative federations.

The **sustainable** element is addressed primarily through training and education – a major emphasis in all of AGUA's varied sub-projects. At the outset, diagnostics were prepared that identified problems as well as beneficiaries – criteria that defined educational needs in order to help insure longevity. Working with local, private, and public institutions, sub-projects were identified to address identified needs and developed through local participants – the individuals that will have the responsibility of the project in the future. Important areas that have been the focus include:

- Increased municipal capacity to respond to water related client needs through improved technical & administrative capacity, water resource development plans, and municipal ordinances
- Increased citizen awareness of water-related problems
- Preparation of local committees to run and maintain potable water systems
- Improved citizen advocacy efforts

The **replicable** element is addressed by maximizing program impacts nationwide through demonstration projects mechanisms. AGUA is responding to problems that are widespread and extremely costly to mitigate. Surface water pollution is a good example. The resources necessary to clean up the country's waterways is beyond any development agency's budget. Instead, the goal is to demonstrate appropriate solutions that can be utilized by Salvadoran organizations.

The WATER IQC was used to obtain the services of one of the top US environmental engineering firms to facilitate a three day workshop on appropriate technologies in sewage treatment. Following on this, several sewage and solid waste treatment plants are now under implementation with emphasis on recycling/re-use to recuperate operation and maintenance costs. Continuing work will include publicizing these projects through visits and promotional campaigns. National

impact can be expected when these experiences are replicated in other areas of the country. Moreover, the model used by AGUA, promoting local participation, can be replicated through other donor organizations such as the IDB, and local governments outside the target municipalities. There is interest in using AGUA's lessons learned in the development of USAID water resources initiatives in other countries in the region.

### Partners

**CARE – El Salvador** is implementing AGUA's principle cooperative agreement developed around the WE strategy through a consortium of local NGOs, SALVANATURA, FUNDAMUNI AND SACDEL. The focus area includes 18 municipalities in three departments.

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**World Vision**, another cooperative agreement, works in two of the AGUA municipalities promoting conservation through improved agricultural practices in the integrated management of five micro-watersheds.

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### APS

During the first year of the AGUA Project, an Annual Program Statement (APS) mechanism was used to field proposals in order to develop a more diversified implementation portfolio to expand AGUA's impact. Four cooperative agreements were signed within five months of publication.

**Project Concern International (PCI)** is implementing two solid waste disposal projects, one sewage treatment facility, and activities in sustainable agriculture. The solid and liquid waste disposal was created around the concept of demonstration and will show the benefits of recycling and re-use while working towards cleaning up the rural



**Training session on use of Integrated Farm Plans, Department of Usulután**

environment. The agriculture project is combining watershed protection, technology transfer, crop diversification and marketing assistance in order to increase family incomes and protect the environment in five rural communities.

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**Catholic Relief Services (CRS)** is implementing an activity to benefit hillside farmers in eastern El Salvador, integrating local family agricultural businesses into competitive vegetable and fruit markets. This is being accomplished by organizing farmers into groups and introducing improved production technologies - sustainable soil and water resources practices, rain water-catchment and storage, drip irrigation, post harvest handling, and marketing procedures. The marketing concepts developed through this activity have been so successful that this component will be expanded to serve other areas of AGUA where farmers can benefit from improved markets services.

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*Border Development Services (BDS)* is promoting the concepts of appropriate technology sewage treatment to rural El Salvador. A workshop was carried out to introduce the general public to decentralized treatment using rapid biological filters. An alliance was later formed with CARE – El Salvador and this treatment process is now being implemented in a Salvadoran community. The treatment plant will include a visitor's center that will help promote the idea of "demonstration" of this project's highly effective technology and re-use components.

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*ICCA – CAMAGRO (ICCA)* focuses on increasing small farmer income through provision of market services and the promotion of environmentally friendly technologies. ICCA's entrepreneurial management approach works with established organizations such as PAES and CENTA in strengthening second level agricultural organizations that will facilitate first level organizations' access to competitive markets, and provides information and training for demand based product orientation.

### **Components of AGUA**

The AGUA Activity has three interrelated components: 1) Institutional Coordination and Policy; 2) Integrated Water Management in Municipalities; and 3) Citizens Awareness, Participation and Action. These three components are described in detail below.

Component 1: Institutional Coordination and Policy Activities developed under this Component are focused primarily at the local level and support selected municipalities in water resources regulation endeavors. Decentralization, primarily for potable water systems, is heavily promoted by the national government and AGUA is furthering these efforts by helping to strengthen the technical and managerial capacity of local water systems & administrators.

Relations have been established with Municipal Councils, leaders and communal boards. Capacity building processes have been implemented to strengthen the operating framework and prepare management plans and ordinances to regulate and protect water and environmental resources within municipalities.

USAID – AGUA considers watershed regulation one of the most effective legislative means of improving and conserving water resources. AGUA has formed many local level watershed committees – though a national umbrella organization is needed to coordinate their efforts and legalize them as operating entities. Efforts are now underway to form a national watershed commission within the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN). This commission will promote and coordinate local watershed committees as well as eventually provide these grassroot organizations with the legal authority to regulate their watersheds. Technical assistance will be provided to educate the participants and formulate the national committee's directives and operating/legal framework and will include the creation of three recognized watershed organizations.

### ***National Water Policy Initiative***

The USAID WE and DG offices co-funded an IQC contract to provide technical assistance to support several water policy endeavors sponsored by the El Salvadoran national government. These include the review of two national water laws with the National Water Authority (ANDA), and the creation of a national watershed commission with MARN. A water policy consortium was thus formed that includes contributing USAID partners, local organizations, and government agencies. The group's goal is to assist in the creation and implementation of regulatory mechanisms that equitably and efficiently govern the management of water resources.

### **Component 2: Integrated Water Management in Municipalities**

Areas of assistance include: protection of water sources and infiltration zones; control of point sources of pollution such as open dumps, sewage outflows, and industrial discharges; watershed and sub-watershed planning; management and expansion of water systems to serve the maximum number of people; preparation of documentation to seek additional resources for water systems and wastewater treatment; and training which will allow municipal officials and community members to more effectively manage water resources.

The CARE consortium has achieved significant results in this component. They have trained producers and farm owners in conservation practices, and established environmental learning sites to serve local collaborators who are demonstrating activities that improve the environment.



### Component 3: Citizen Awareness, Participation, and Action

Successful integration of civil society depends heavily on the will and ability of the people to organize and participate effectively. Civil society needs to be aware of the causes behind problems as well as feasible solutions.

This component fosters increased citizen awareness and participation in order to create an effective organized demand that leads to actions resolving community water problems. This is a major challenge that will be achieved through education activities that include awareness campaigns, and formal/informal water-related issues education.

#### Environmental Responsibilities

An amended IEE was approved by Washington for well drilling. Under this IEE, grantees will maintain compliance with an appropriate watershed management plan. AGUA will serve as an environmental mitigation example to other institutions in the implementation of water projects.

Environmental Assessments for new waste water and solid waste treatment plants have been conducted and await formal approval by the MARN.

The WE office is in compliance with all USAID environmental regulations.

#### FIAES - Initiative for the Americas Enterprise - Debt Reduction Fund

On December 15, 1992, the Vice-President of the United States signed an agreement in El Salvador to reduce the PL 480 and aid debt by \$464 million. The interest on the remaining \$159 million debt is paid to a local currency fund for use primarily by NGOs in environmental protection and child survival projects.

Since then, a total of 384 proposals have been approved and \$27.3 million disbursed to local organizations for reforestation, protected area management, and soil and water conservation. In 2001, El Salvador and the United States signed a new agreement for the establishment of a Tropical Forest Conservation Fund to be administered by FIAES. This Fund will be used to facilitate conservation, protection, and restoration & sustainable use and management of forests in El Salvador.

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Well drilling, Puente Arce Potable Water Project, El Jocotillo, Municipality of San Francisco Menéndez.

#### Earthquake Reconstruction

A programmatic environmental assessment for earthquake reconstruction, prepared by the WE office, was approved by Washington in August 2001. This PEA establishes environmental guidelines for all mission reconstruction activities as well as monitoring and environmental review procedures. The mission will rely heavily on this important document to provide guidance during the implementation of a wide variety of reconstruction, primarily in provision of appropriate environmental mitigation in many high risk areas. The WE office provides approval of environmental guidelines for all reconstruction activities and is working closely with the ER office and its partners, the USACE, and the USGS.



Debris flows are extremely destructive environmental events that can be mitigated by adherence to effective environmental guidelines.

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